

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus including hardware resources comprising at least a plotter configured to form an image and ~~in which~~ software configured to control the hardware resources to form ~~is used for forming~~ an image, the image forming apparatus comprising:

a display unit;

a display information controlling unit configured to control information displayed on said display unit;

an interface unit configured to provide a physical connection with an external apparatus on which an application is implemented;

a control unit configured to control said interface unit and provide a logical connection with the external apparatus; and

a relay unit configured to relay between the application and the software, said relaying unit notifying said display information controlling unit of a display that is to be presented on said display unit to indicate ongoing initialization ~~preparation~~ of the application at the external apparatus until the application becomes operational when said control unit provides the logical connection with the external apparatus.

2. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said display information controlling unit makes said display unit present said display in response to an attempt by a user to use the application.

3. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said control unit notifies said relay unit that no communication is possible, in response to a physical or logical disconnection occurring with respect to the external apparatus.

4. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a starting unit configured to start said relay unit.

5. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 4, wherein said starting unit starts said relay unit after the external apparatus is physically connected.

6. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 4, wherein said starting unit utilizes said control unit to check whether the external apparatus is physically connected.

7. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a registering unit configured to register the application, such registration making the application operable through said image forming apparatus.

8. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 7, wherein said registering unit unregisters the application in response to a request from said relay unit.

9. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 8, wherein said relay unit requests said registering unit to unregister the application, such request being made in response to a notice from said control unit indicating that no communication is possible.

10. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 8, wherein, when said registering unit unregisters the application, said display information controlling unit switches the information displayed on said display unit to other information if the information displayed on said display unit is associated with the application.

11. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said other information is associated with the software.

12. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein said registering unit is configured to register the application again if the external apparatus is reconnected after the application is unregistered.

13. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 4, further comprising a program unregistering unit which unregisters said relay unit by releasing a memory area in which a program of said relay unit is laid out.

14. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 13, wherein said relay unit, responding to a notice from said control unit indicating that no communication is possible, notifies said starting unit that the application is unregistered, and requests said program unregistering unit to unregister the application.

15. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein said relay unit is restarted by said starting unit if the external apparatus is connected after said relay unit is unregistered.

16. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein said relay unit, responding to a notice from said control unit indicating that no communication is possible during execution of the application, notifies said display information controlling unit of a display that is to be presented on said display unit to indicate error occurrence.

17. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 3, further comprising an email sending unit, wherein said relay unit, responding to a notice from said control unit indicating that no communication is possible during execution of the application, instructs said email sending unit to send email indicative of error occurrence to a predetermined mail address.

18. (Currently Amended) A method of allowing an external application to be operated through an image forming apparatus having a display unit and hardware resources comprising at least a plotter configured to form an image and software configured to control the hardware resources to form an image, the external application being implemented in an external apparatus connectable to the image forming apparatus, said method comprising ~~the~~ steps of:

connecting the external apparatus to the image forming apparatus;

preparing a display that indicates ongoing initialization of the application at the external apparatus ~~preparation~~ until the application becomes operational; and

presenting the display on the display unit until the application becomes operational in response to an attempt by a user to use the application.